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SUBJECT: TURKISH POLITICAL TURMOIL: VIEWS FROM THE  
SOUTHEAST

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice G. Weiner, reasons 1.4(b),(d)

1.(U) This is a joint Consulate Adana-Embassy Ankara report.

2.(C) Summary: Viewed from Adana and points east, the events of the past week in Ankara do not appear to have fundamentally altered the balance of political power. If anything, the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) stands to gain some votes in the region, while the center-right parties could lose support. AKP representatives are confident about their chances and believe direct presidential elections will be a step forward. Old-line establishment representatives are grateful that the AKP has been blocked, even though the military was involved. One multinational businessman was all but indifferent to the political "crisis", confident that the current economic stability will continue. The broad-based enthusiasm we found for direct presidential elections shows that ordinary Turkish citizens are ready to take this responsibility away from the parliamentarians, judges, and military officers who they believe have botched the job this time. End summary.

Gaming the Election: AKP Bounce is in the Cards  
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3.(C) Observers in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish areas all agree that the moves by the military and the Constitutional Court will redound to the AKP's benefit in the coming elections. Yilmaz Akinci, a Diyarbakir-based journalist, noted that the adage "my enemy's enemy is my friend" will prompt many Kurds to now see the AKP as a force standing against the Turkish military and therefore worthy of support. Similarly, Siyar Ozsoy, an advisor to Diyarbakir's pro-Kurdish Democratic Society Party (DTP) mayor, said that many of the voters in the Southeast who are on the fence between the DTP and the AKP will now opt for the latter. "Now they can vote for the AKP and feel that they are voting against the state."

4.(C) Gaziantep-based Kurdish contacts echoed this assessment. The local DTP chair noted that the parties that boycotted the first round of presidential voting (opposition CHP, DYP and Anavatan) will face a backlash at the polls by voters who see them as too close to the military. He also believed that DTP would benefit, predicting it would win upwards of 35 seats by running its candidates as independents. A former chairman of the Adana AKP told us that several DYP and Anavatan members in Adana had resigned

from their parties and he predicted AKP, as the only other moderate, right-of-center party, would benefit.

5.(C) In contrast with Erdogan's harsh criticism of the court's decision, the AKP mayor of Gaziantep and his party colleagues were more upbeat. Mayor Asim Guzelbey was excited about the prospect of holding direct elections for president, saying that a system modeled on France's two-round presidential election system would increase the legitimacy of the process and represent a step forward in Turkish democracy. The AKP provincial leadership in Gaziantep also welcomed direct presidential elections and was supremely confident that, as the only party organizationally ready for early elections, AK would increase from 41 percent to above 50 percent in Gaziantep.

#### The Old Establishment: A Sigh of Relief

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6.(C) Traditionalists in the farming and journalism communities of Adana and Gaziantep were pleased with the military's intervention. Citrus farmer, and member of Adana's premier Kemalist family, Mustafa Gulek, said he was surprised the TGS waited as long as it did before issuing a statement. Gulek said he believes the AKP does not have the legitimacy to elect the president since its mandate is nearly five years old and it received fewer than 40 percent of the votes cast. Another Adana farmer, Mehmet Yaltir, told us that "too much democracy is dangerous" and Turks welcomed the military's willingness to step in to protect secularism.

7.(C) Businessman and owner of Gaziantep's oldest local newspaper, Aykut Tuzcu, was both relieved and excited as he

ANKARA 00001053 002 OF 002

watched the Constitutional Court's announcement during our meeting. He believed the Court's decision made early elections inevitable because the AKP would not be able to sell another "compromise candidate" to its voters. This was a pragmatic way to settle the "dangerous" divide that had been created in Turkish society.

#### Business Community Unfazed

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8.(C) Sami Konukoglu, a board member of the Sanko conglomerate (a billion dollar group whose businesses include textiles, heavy equipment and building materials), expressed no concern about political events in Ankara when we met just prior to the court decision. He noted that the equity market saw only a seven percent sell-off, which would have been 30-40 percent ten years ago. Konukoglu said he had spent the weekend at a trade fair in Germany and completed deals to sell hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of earth-moving vehicles to European clients; not a single customer raised questions about political stability in Turkey. "There is a zero percent chance of a military coup in Turkey," he said. Konukoglu also observed that the controversy over secularism vs. Kemalism is a cover for a basic competition for power, saying he is confident that the democratic process would correct any unreasonable encroachments on secularism.

9.(C) Comment: In the coming elections, the AKP looks poised to build on its strong showing in the developed Adana-Gaziantep region and to parlay its "victim" status into an increased vote count in the heavily Kurdish areas of the Southeast. The broad-based enthusiasm for direct presidential elections, meanwhile, shows that ordinary Turkish citizens are ready to take this responsibility away from the parliamentarians, judges, and military officers who they believe have botched the job this time. End comment.

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